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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KAMPALA 001895

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TAGS: PHUM PREL PGOV UG SU CG

SUBJECT: UGANDAN PRESIDENT MUSEVENI FLEXIBLE ON "PLAN B"

REF: KAMPALA 1779

Classified By: P/E Chief Kathleen FitzGibbon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).).

¶1. (C) Summary: President Yoweri Museveni does not believe that Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leader Joseph Kony wants peace, but is willing to allow the peace process to continue until March. On December 14, Museveni complained to U.N. Special Envoy for LRA-Affected Areas Joachim Chissano that Kony was a coward and recent intelligence indicated he had no intention of surrendering. Former GOU negotiator Betty Bigombe told Museveni that time was on Uganda's side, not Kony's, and advised that the GOU should not rush to Plan B until all avenues of reaching Kony were exhausted and as many women and children were out of the bush as possible. End Summary.

U.N. SPECIAL ENVOY IN REGION

¶2. (C) On December 13, U.N. Special Envoy for LRA-Affected Areas Joachim Chissano met with donors, who urged him to persuade President Museveni to be flexible on the deadline for the peace process. Chissano agreed to raise the issue with Museveni. He advised the donors to hold off on a proposed press statement urging a flexible timetable until he had met with President Kabilo on December 14. Chissano said that it would be detrimental to the peace process if the rumors were true about Kony's intention to move to Central African Republic and abduct children. Chissano also said that it was important for Kony to demonstrate a commitment to the Juba process, and that Kony may need time to reorganize his forces and delegation in the wake of Vincent Otti's killing.

¶3. (C) Chissano expressed his opposition to MONUC's encouragement of LRA defections. In his view, MONUC should receive and repatriate defectors to Uganda, but not actively participate in encouraging them. His fear is that the LRA would splinter into groups that would join others and create problems in the future. Chissano was trying to see Kony, but did not believe that "Kony was in a mood to meet" before seeing his own delegation with the results of its consultations in Uganda. Nonetheless, Chissano would continue his efforts to communicate with Kony.

¶4. (C) Chissano raised the issue of the deadline with President Museveni later in the day. According to African observers who attended the meeting, Museveni said information emerging from the "terrorist holiday center" at Garamba National Park indicated that Kony was not interested in the peace. They said that it was clear the Museveni was prepared to exercise a military option after the deadline, or before if Kony began moving or abducting children. Museveni told Chissano that the LRA could have one month beyond the January 31 deadline that he agreed with Congolese President Kabilo. (Note: LRA negotiating delegation leader Martin Ojul told

donors that the talks could be wrapped up by March 1. He later told P/E chief March 15. End Note.) Museveni stated that Uganda had to launch its military operation before the onset of the rainy season and could not wait any longer than mid-March.

¶5. (C) Museveni expressed outrage to Chissano that Kony had killed Otti. Andre Kapanga, the Congolese observer to the talks, said that Museveni spent the bulk of the meeting complaining about Kony's cowardice. Museveni was angry that someone like Kony, who he claimed ran away from battles and abused children, could kill Otti, a battle-hardened leader and excellent strategist. Kapanga said that Museveni acted as if he were personally insulted by Otti's execution.

BIGOMBE MEETS MUSEVENI

¶6. (C) Former GOU negotiator Betty Bigombe also met with Museveni for a few hours on December 13. Bigombe had given P/E chief a read-out of an earlier lunch with Chief of Defense Forces Aronda in which Aronda said Plan B was the only option given the new information emerging from Garamba. Aronda said that military operations were needed to kill or capture Kony, who he said had no intentions of surrendering. Bigombe also said that Museveni was convinced that Plan B was inevitable. He asked Bigombe for her advice. She explained to Museveni that for now, time was on the GOU's side. The GOU should encourage the defections and rescue as many women and children as possible. Bigombe stated that the GOU's patience had paid off through the softening of international opinion about Museveni's actions in northern Uganda, and that the LRA's own actions were undermining it among northern leaders and residents. Bigombe argued that the GOU should

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demonstrate it had exhausted all the options available before launching a military strike. For example, a last ditch attempt to communicate with Kony directly would bolster Uganda's actions in the event of a military strike.

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